



## Leadership and Vision in Social Action

When the Dream Expires.  
Can the Vision Revive?

Robert Dann

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**LEADERSHIP AND VISION IN SOCIAL ACTION**

**When the Dream Expires  
Can the Vision Revive?**

The Eighth G. T. Sambell Memorial Oration  
delivered by

**The Right Reverend Robert Dann**

on

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at the

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of

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## FOREWORD

### In honour of Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell

Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell was born in Broadford, Victoria in 1914 and later attended Melbourne Boys' High School. His leadership qualities were recognised when he was selected for the Lord Somers Camp, after which he played rugby with Powerhouse. This fostered his interest in young people and led him into a leadership role in the Church of England Boys' Society.

During a short but promising business career he was involved with St Mark's Social Settlement during the 1930s. He was then called to the ministry and he entered Ridley College and was ordained in 1940. After serving a curacy at St John's East Malvern he served with great distinction as a Chaplain with the Australian Military Forces, both in the 57/60 and 2/11 battalions in New Guinea where he was mentioned in despatches. After the war he completed his Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University.

In 1947 he was appointed Director of the Melbourne Diocesan Centre, a co-ordinated multi-parish and chaplaincy venture based in the inner city. While in that position he was appointed as Archdeacon of Melbourne in 1961 when he became for a time the Director of Home Missions. In the midst of his Diocesan responsibilities, and his leadership of the Brotherhood of St Laurence he was also Warden of the Mission to Streets and Lanes, and involved in other welfare activities including the Victorian Council of Social Service. He was consecrated Bishop in St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne on 24th February 1962 and subsequently enthroned Archbishop of Perth in 1969. He died in December 1980 after an outstanding Episcopate in Western Australia and throughout the national church.

The G. T. Sambell Memorial Oration has been established by the Brotherhood of St Laurence to commemorate his work. His connection with the Brotherhood was longstanding and arose out of his deep social concern which had been the chief among the several forces which led him into full-time service of the church. He had great organising ability, recognised by Fr Tucker who invited him to join the Brotherhood in 1949. He was firstly involved as a member of the Board of Directors, then as Bursar, Director of Social Services and in 1956 Director and Deputy Chairman of the Board. Later in the 1960s he became Chairman of the Board, a post he retained until he moved to Perth.

Geoffrey Sambell was a big man, in body, mind and spirit. Long before he died (at the age of 66) his influence had been felt far and wide in the Anglican Communion and in the ecumenical movement beyond. He twice represented the Australian Church at the East Asia Christian Conference, and was the representative of South-East Asia on the Executive Officer's Advisory Committee of the Lambeth Consultative Body. In Australia he was the dynamic Chairman of the General Synod Social Responsibilities Commission, which under his leadership spoke out for the national church on social questions. He was respected and listened to by Government at both State and Federal levels, and in 1978 he was appointed Chairman of the Federal Government's Social Welfare Advisory Committee.

He was a forceful character who could, and sometimes did, ride roughshod over opposition, backing his judgment and knowing that he was right. But behind the bluff exterior he had the heart of a pastor who never spared himself for anyone, clergyman or layman, who needed his help. He had vision, but it was a very "down to earth" vision; he was a loyal Anglican but at the same time a wholehearted ecumenist; he was a missionary and a missionary, but spurned paternalism or ecclesiastical triumphalism; he was an ordained priest, but no one welcomed the rediscovered "priesthood" of the laity more than he did or had more friends amongst them.

Leader, pastor, organiser, financier - he was all these, but much more, a man of God.

**G.T. Sambell Orations:**

- 1981: **Why Care? The Basis for Christian Social Action;** Frank Woods.
- 1982: **God, People and Resources: A Christian Comment on the Values of Australian Society;** Oliver Heyward.
- 1983: **Educating for Justice: A Conversation with the Church about its Life and Gospel;** Denham Grierson.
- 1984: **Giving and Receiving: The framework of social support for individuals and families;** Jean McCaughey.
- 1985: **Ancient Laws and Modern Dilemmas;** David Scott
- 1986: **Parish Piety and Public Pragmatism;** Michael Challen
- 1987: **"Be it ever so humble . . . There's no place like home;** Peter Hollingworth

## **LEADERSHIP AND VISION IN SOCIAL ACTION:**

### **When the Dream Expires Can the Vision Revive?**

**LOVE IN ACTION IS A HARSH AND DREADFUL THING  
COMPARED WITH LOVE IN DREAMS - Dostoevsky(1)**

These words compress in a startling way what most have experienced: the dramatic dichotomy between vision and action. The cost in loving might ultimately stop us in our tracks, if, for no other reason we are exhausted, we have had enough. But the dream itself may falter and fail. Where, then, are we to find the fresh springs of action?

I am sure Dostoevsky did not discount the significance and essential value of the dreaming. Everyone committed and engaged in welfare in our society must dream, and do their dreaming well, if they are to be of use. This truth applies to the individual with a vocation to help even one person; it applies equally and with accumulated force to any welfare organisation which aspires to influence. Browning understood the priority of the dream when he wrote: "A man's vision must exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for?"

At this season we remember a seemingly harmless priest named Tucker. His dreams were not big by most of our customary yardsticks (think how empty-handed he was) but they were big in the one sense that really matters: they had heart in them. And any welfare body worth its salt today must be big on this kind of dreaming; it must go on generating a fresh vision of its particular role, and, please God, be an effective goad in shaking the policy makers and the public generally with a quickened conscience towards the neighbour. If it can offer a blue-print or two for people to bite into, so much the better. (Think of the impact of the Henderson Report on Poverty and the association of the Brotherhood with its preparation.)

A difficulty in this field of work is that every dream and vision exhausts itself; at least it must frequently be restated as things change. Changes in social and political values have been remarkable in the last few years. How fast do welfare leaders have to run to stay ahead! Despite its many faults the television series **The True Believers** did forcibly remind us of some of these great changes in social attitudes. It is not a long time since unemployment loomed large as a grave social problem; that perception is now substantially fudged by much vaunted talk of the great achievements in new job creation. The heartache of the seven per cent jobless remains. Is the following quotation from **Time** of August 22 also appropriate to what is happening in our country?

"In a lead editorial recently, the Los Angeles **Times** noted that "in subtle ways Reagan made it acceptable to resent assistance to poor people. No longer was there emphasis on the citizens fulfilling their collective responsibility to society through the vehicle of government.""

Has not something like this happened here? Many would say "yes" to that. Such an answer endorses the increasingly important prophetic role of the voluntary welfare bodies. So, even with diminished resources, these bodies press on with major initiatives backed by careful research. And their leaders go on being presented with the perennial question - after this, what next? What next, indeed! It is then that we recognise how much the dreaming matters; we know, too, that fresh dreams stubbornly resist any "open Sesame" demand. So the tired professional workers, well-versed in today's applied psychology, will take time off to read widely out of the ideas and experiences of others.

Even some foreign field of study may proffer fresh straw to make new bricks. There will be brainstorming sessions with one's peers, and the potential in every conflict of opinion will be wrung dry.

What next? It is an ever-present question. What next to



press in the questioning of public welfare attitudes and policies? What next comes out of fresh attempts to listen patiently and attentively to new hurts. What next will make a fresh appeal to government and private sources that bestow the welfare dollar?

These questions (along with many others) constantly test the patience and engage the wit of any frontier body such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Everyone expects it to sustain its keen, cutting edge. Experimental in stance and open to change, unearthing through experiment and research, fresh data about the powerless and poor, the Brotherhood is accepted by the media as a reputable guide to where the social conscience should now be.

Should we now be giving priority to child abuse, to prison reform, to multicultural enhancement after all the unfortunate negations of the fork-tongued immigration debate?

For whoever it is that does the leading and the dreaming, the frustrations must be very great. I had the privilege of knowing Geoffrey Sambell well and gladly share in this lecture series which honours his memory. He was consistently a restless man of vision. And I know, and some of you will know, how enormously frustrated he could become. And how frequently!

A similar note of frustration comes through in several of the previous Sambell Lectures. Alongside the fresh thinking they have offered there has also been an accompanying cry of bewilderment and frustration and anger..... One can understand how this must be. But unless the energies in these feelings are transformed they poison the well and hinder our creativity.

Yes, "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing...". Dostoevsky did not have in mind the welfare lobby confronting a government "razor gang", though he might have been glad to include such a lobby if what they said had heart in it. He was thinking of all the men and women who had chosen to align themselves with the last

and the least, not theoretically, not in a state of righteous anger, not by word, but by deed, by identification.

Dostoevsky was fascinated by the manner in which so many who had committed themselves to the service of others could stick it out when the yoke of loving and caring became a "harsh and dreadful thing". It is the archetypal fascination of the Cross. It engages our sensibilities whenever we encounter a Mother Teresa, and there are plenty of people like her about, unheralded though they may be. What enduring thing is it that has been the content of their dream? What sustains them in the midst of the mess, the frustration, the despair even...? What are the lineaments of their hope?

When the dream expires can the vision revive? This lecture poses the question on behalf of all engaged, at whatever level of leadership, in the welfare field. And hesitatingly suggests three avenues of reflection which may contribute to a useful discussion of the matter.

These may be simply expressed:

Look wide

Look back

Look ahead

The first is a need of which I have already spoken: look wide, open up your reading as a way of coming in touch with fresh ideas; be all eyes and ears and silent of tongue as you give yourself again to the discipline of listening; leave your special interests aside for a while and see what is going on in welfare in a different sphere; do some brainstorming with others who may be glad to share your

frustration or despair. I will not go on any further about this for the methodology is well known; setting it in train is almost an automatic response in our culture; in any case there are others who can fill out this theme much better than I.

But I do want to affirm this approach for I believe the all-lively Holy Spirit may be present in such a discipline and there can be no better guide in our quest than he. There may be no avowedly religious intent in our brainstorming, or discussion or sharing. But the saying of Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" may indeed prove to be true. Matthew 25, verse 31 and following, tells us that if the very heart and centre of our concern are the people described by Jesus as the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner, then he, Jesus himself is there, he is the heart and centre of our concern. And where he is he is the source of power and inspiration by the action of his Holy Spirit.

So long as it is love that is in action that's all that matters. We might paraphrase St Paul for ourselves while we are on this theme : "I may work long hours to the point of exhaustion, I may participate in high-powered conferences on poverty, I may vigorously debate issues with my fellow workers, I may burn the midnight oil in reading and research, I may lobby the authorities with all the persuasion at my command, or, I may slave my guts out for needy people who seem totally indifferent to me, but if I have not love, I am nothing" (c.f 1 Corinthians 13).

If we keep coming back to the simple absolute of love we need never fear for the renewal of our vision. I am not sure of the Russian word for it, nor that of another word to which it is linked in Dostoevsky - dreadful but I expect it approximates to our English synonyms - awful, full of dread, holy. They all remind us of the kind of love it is that we are talking about. Carl Jung asserted that for all our modern secularity the Cross of the Christian tradition still asserted both a profound attraction and a force in western society. Or, if you prefer physics to psyche, you

may well encounter the picture language and symbols of religion being called on to "explain" things (c.f Capra: **The Tao of Physics** for example). And the Cross and an old law of physics cohere - where a negative charge and a positive charge are bound together, there is power. Love in action and the "harsh and dreadful" are so bound up together. Take heart!

This brings me to my second suggestion: Look back!

You may consider this part of this paper as a devotional reflection. So there will be some who will wish to demythologise it as they go; please do! Its starting point is here:

How do I begin again after running into a dead end?

The way of seeming failure, disappointed hopes, utter negation, was for the followers of Jesus, summed up in his death. When the data began to arrive that he was no longer thus "finished" but was alive again they were bewildered. But after a time each took the new thing on board. Then there was a phenomenal release of inner energy, enthusiasm and power.

I pick up from the Gospel tradition one example of the pattern to be found in this recovery or return. The record in Matthew, Mark and John consistently affirms that the risen Jesus required the disciples to leave Jerusalem and return to Galilee. "I will meet you there" he promised. According to Matthew it was back in Galilee that they received the renewal of their previously given authority to be the proclaimers of the good news of the Kingdom of God. It was in Galilee by the lakeside John tells us that Peter was released from the guilt and disgrace of moral collapse. It was wiped out in the commission: "Feed my lambs; Feed my lambs; Feed my sheep".

When everyone that really mattered was in Jerusalem, why the return to Galilee? It's a puzzle. In the travelling conditions of those times it was a very long way back to Galilee. And it was a backwater; socially and politically

it lacked any pretence or potential as a centre of influence. Why Galilee? (A comparative latecomer to the scene, Luke in his Gospel and the Acts, makes no mention of it.)

But our inner reflection may well validate what the other three Evangelists say: there must be a return to Galilee; it is sometimes necessary to go back on one's tracks, to get in touch with the freshness of what it was like in the beginning with its strange promptings, stirrings, sense of adventure, call.

Galilee was simpler. Jerusalem was full of conflicting forces, bitterness, anger, plots, game-playing and paranoia. The disciples, or most of them, had broken down there. The record says - "They all forsook him and fled". It was a good place to get away from; it had all the wrong associations. What better place than Galilee? They needed to be quiet where they could feel less overwhelmed and ponder the things that really mattered on the other side of the hard and dreadful.

Lately I have been learning to knit. I now have the time! And it is a way of relaxing and of filling in some of the mindless bits while watching television! And how often I have had to unravel row after row of errors and return again to the bit a long way back that was unspilt and start again. And I know only too well how very tired you can get working at the coal face of loving and how easy it is to mess things up. There comes a point when everybody needs to become disengaged from the sort of thing represented by Jerusalem and return to Galilee. There appears to be a common thread running through all the experimental forms of spirituality and it has to do with a return of some sort: journal keeping, personal story telling, allowing the very old that is buried in the subconscious or wherever to speak or dream or paint or dance.

What is at the heart of such a quest? It cannot be for a return to innocence. The disciples whom Jesus asked to meet in Galilee could not empty themselves of the

experiences of the past three years nor become detached from their inward discoveries, their pain and their growth. They had become what they had become. They were richer; but they were also broken, lost, baffled about what next. The unspoken quest for them must have been that of healing and wholeness and hope. And to be given back their pride in their call.

To use religious terminology the goal of their quest was conversion. "Conversion requires that we hear God in a new way in our life and the experience is often preceded by crisis." The Episcopal priest Urban Holmes describes the situation using categories developed by Victor Turner, a social anthropologist, who speaks of structures, anti-structures, and liminal experiences.

"Structure.....is a way of describing my situation when I am living an orderly existence. My life is under control and I can well articulate who I am and where I am going. The anti-structure is a way of describing my situation when my former cosmos becomes chaos. In other words, the certainties of my life are gone and my normal understandings are not operative. Liminal experiences are those transition experiences I have as I move between the anti-structure, and back to structure again."(2)

Is this language of "liminal experiences" something I can make sense of? For me, as I asked this question, I spontaneously recalled powerful bits of writing by Boris Pasternak in **Doctor Zhivago**. As he reflected on the inner meaning of the prolonged Russian Orthodox ceremonies of Easter Eve, which mark the mysterious transition between the mourning of the death of Jesus and the breaking out into joyful celebration of his resurrection, Pasternak wrote: "Near him (that is, near Christ) touching him, were hell, corruption, dissolution, death; yet equally near him were the spring, and Mary Magdalen and life. And it was time to awake. Time to awake and to get up. Time to arise, time for the resurrection.... There is nothing to worry about. There is no death. Death is not our department. There will be no death says St John, and just

look at the simplicity of his argument. There will be no death because the past is over; that's almost like saying there will be no death because death is already done with, its old and we are tired of it. What we need is something new, and the new thing is life eternal."(3)

Pasternak captured the liminal experience in the words - "There is no death because the past is over". The new structure was already coming into being.

For others, the liminal experience has come through their close identification with Peter. Peter is, after all, the one person all Christians may possibly identify with. Jesus nominated Peter as being the type and representative of the characteristic believer, the kind of individual or foundation on which all would be built. Did Jesus smile to himself as he prophesied - "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18)? And he must have foreseen the kind of thing that would happen. Nevertheless he marked him for leadership.

Peter, the representative person? At his best **and** at his weakest? For Peter the seeming triumph of the anti-structures around Jesus must have seemed as nothing compared with his own undoing within. And the liminal experience for him is told by St John in the story of the breakfast at the lakeside. Peter was reinstated in his leadership role and in that he never looked back. For him, as for the others, there was a new sense of elan, of energy that had been given, as of the Spirit.

I have wondered: does Mother Teresa ever need to go back? Did Francis of Assisi or St Clare or Albert Schweitzer? I expect so.

Desmond Tutu goes back again and again to a chief turning point: he was just a lad and for the first time in his life he observed a white man show respect to his black mother - he showed a courtesy of those days and raised his hat to her. That man was Trevor Huddleston. A great deal of modern history hangs on that moment.

Dag Hammerskjold, one time secretary to the United Nations, while immersed in that immensely responsible and often despairing job, liked to stop and go back. As he recalls: "I don't know who - or what - put the question, I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer "Yes" to Someone - or Something - and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life in self-surrender, had a goal. From that moment I know what it means "not to look back", and "to take no thought for the morrow.""(4)

Another such illustration is to be found in the writing of an outstanding French woman, Simone Weil. She grew to adulthood during the Thirties. She involved herself in the political issues and in the consequential care of people in the Spanish civil war. Later she gave herself to the cause of the French Resistance in the Second World War. She died young, having spent herself to the point of exhaustion in her passion for the oppressed. Bits and pieces of her writing were subsequently gathered and published; they are totally unorthodox yet profound. Of Jewish parentage she was brought up in a completely secular manner. Yet this is how she describes that moment to which she constantly returned:

"I heard by chance of the existence of those English poets of the seventeenth century who are named metaphysical. I discovered the poem called **Love** (by George Herbert). I learnt it by heart. Often I made myself say it over, concentrating all my attention upon it, and clinging with all my soul to the tenderness it enshrines. I used to think I was merely reciting it as a beautiful poem, but without my knowing it the recitation had the virtue of a prayer. It was during one of these recitations that Christ himself came down and took possession of me.

"Until last September I had never once prayed to God in all my life."(5)

In the early history of the Brotherhood of St Laurence



there were frequent setbacks; things stopped and fresh starts were made. It is clear that Father Tucker knew how important it was to go back to capture again the energy of his primal vision; then he set out on a new tack once more.

Geoffrey Sambell likewise, I believe (for I knew him well). His was not a formally trained and disciplined mind when it came to social issues. But he had an unerring instinct, primitive and passionate if you like, which invested him with authority and power. He seldom strayed from his original, dynamic call and he was prompt in its recovery.

I now turn to a third possible antidote to frustration and despair: Look forward!

It is possible to sit down and make a list of issues that are "on notice" in our society - or ought to be. Allow that creative bit of you - your imagination - to become engaged in some of these. There may well be some sense of fascination when you let this happen. For fascination consists of equal parts of attraction and dread. Are we prepared to allow ourselves to be stirred in this way? And for why?

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit of truth would go on disclosing more and more of itself in the new: "When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you into all truth...." (John 16:13 and following). We are not, of course, to be so gullible as to accept every vaunted new thing: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1). We are to test, and I expect experiment is another word for that, and to go about handling the future in an expectant way.

I offer just a few brief questions which may hint at some of the possibilities and start you off on a long list of your own:

Ways are being sought to recruit representative numbers of Aboriginal, Asian and other minority groups into our

police force....

A long established community welfare body is on the same tack: how can we secure an increase in the participation of our newer populations in the services, studies, staffing, budgetting we provide? Should we?

Does my welfare body unduly occupy centre stage to the detriment of the spontaneity and fecundity of a multitude of new and passionately concerned groups of the astonishing range and kind that turned up as Community and Welfare nominations in the recent B.H.P. Awards for Excellence? Should B.S.L. resources be devoted for a season to the funding and underwriting of the "small and the beautiful"?

Underlying the answers to practically every question about the future is the question of values. Our values are generally taken for granted as self-evident and shared. But we may have to sit up and think when it comes to our public relations and when we join the ranks of the lobbyists. The people we wish to persuade - what are **their** values?

When it comes to values so much seems to be hidden away - that may be why Vance Packard's **The Hidden Persuaders** made the best-seller lists for so long. But it is a century ago since the Sydney **Bulletin** began to ask: what characterises the Australian outlook? A similar quest, and with religious undertones, has stalked Manning Clark throughout the compilation of his great history.

In recent years it is the question about religious values that has become a matter of study: is there an Australian theology? It is a question that had to be asked some day since all values either claim a religious foundation, or, at least, are held with an apparently religious zeal.

My first lesson in the notion of an Australian theology was flawed. I was asked to take part in the making of the television program **A Sunburnt Soul** by providing an interview segment, and a lot of trouble was taken over

getting this done. But what I had to say did not conform to the program theme that our European, Westernised church had imposed external values on the Australian scene and was irrelevant. That the church had "had it" was something I disputed. In due course I was informed that this segment would not go to air. What **did** go to air as a glimpse of contemporary Anglicanism were shots of St Paul's choir singing Evensong in the Cathedral (congregationless) on a week-day afternoon! It seems to me that an Australian theology cannot be cut off from its roots.

The director of this program did however succeed, in part, in suggesting that there must be a connection between the uniqueness of the sunburnt land and the spirit of its people. We are beginning to understand that nexus in the Aboriginal culture. I am told that in parts of Africa there has been a deliberate refusal to attend to the theology and church history of the West and instead to read the scriptures, Old and New, using the idiom and images of the native land.

What are the values that are being discovered in this reflection on an Australian theology? I can best draw your attention to a paper by Dr Robert Banks: "Whatever Happened in the Quest for an Indigenous Theology?"(6).

"Are there Australian images, traditions, patterns of thought, or ways of doing things which affect - or should affect - our thinking as Christians?" he asks.

I quote briefly from his long and careful essay, enough for you to sample the interesting character of this study. He quotes at length from Gordon Dicker who argues that "liberation theology" marks a sea-change in understanding the nature of the theological task. He admits the difficulty of applying it to a Western context, for theologians are members of the "oppressor" rather than the "oppressed" class in relation to the Third World. All theologians can do is engage in solidarity with the oppressed, identifying ways in which they are oppressed themselves, and both repent of and free themselves from,

the oppression of others without becoming paternalistic "do-gooders". He cites the movement for Aboriginal land rights as a case in point. Liberation theology, he concludes, reminds us that a theological critique of our own culture is an urgent necessity and points the way towards a theology that is not imported from abroad but is genuinely our own.

Gordon Dicker focusses directly on the Australian's psyche and talks about its dislike of authority and its sympathy for the "battler" image. The "battler" image that so many Australians warm to or cultivate shows their sympathy for the underdog in society and suspicion of those who have "made it". This attitude has its roots in our convict past, bush legacy and labour-management relations. What we need, he says, is a development of Bonhoeffer's theology, which underlines the weakness of God, the struggle of Jesus and a non-triumphant church.

Dicker identifies four main routes pursued by Australians to the discovery of transcendence, viz., through traditional Christianity, through belief in the Australian Legend, through utopian or moral hopes, and through the accumulation of material wealth. He urges us to have a positive attitude to these last three quests.

Allan Loy, like Gordon Dicker, notes the paradoxical character of Australian culture - it includes freedom and subservience, mateship and impoverished relationships, intensity and apathy, hope and failure. While Australian identity was forged in the period following the failure at Gallipoli, the lack of tragedy in Australian culture, generally, and the dominance of non-mythological secularism has arrested its full development.

(So, no sunburnt Dostoevsky? Nothing in our culture deep enough to resonate with "love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing"?) Robert Banks comments that Allan Loy emphasises the negative strains in Australian life and associates this attitude with Loy's concentration on what he calls "high culture". Dorothy Green tells us that high culture in this country tends to take the form of a protest

against prevailing attitudes rather than representing a reflection of them.

High culture is defined by David Millikan in his book of the film **A Sunburnt Soul** as painting, theatre, history-writing, but he believes we should also include popular culture, e.g., rock music.

Millikan correlates the Australian character with the biblical Christ. He suggests that it is Christ, rather than the Father (or the Spirit) who is most approachable to Australians, particularly aspects of Christ's personality that have some similarity with basic Australian attitudes. He instances the common touch Christ exhibits on many occasions, his conflicts with authority, his attacks upon religious legalism, his unconventional behaviour, his rich sense of humanity, his concern for the underdogs in society and his use of non-religious language in communication. (But is he in danger of producing a portrait of Jesus more in our Australian image than that presented in the gospels?)

Gerald O'Collins regrets Australia's culture dependency upon overseas. As a result truly local answers to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" are still in short supply. He notes the similarity in climate, terrain and even some flora between Australia and Palestine. Also, since geographically and historically both places have found themselves under the shadow of huge neighbours and both have been places of refuge for people fleeing from oppression, there are biblical images such as the Exodus which could interpret Jesus. There is a substantial Jewish and Moslem population in Australia, both of whose beliefs must be taken into account in developing a truly local Christology. He also indicates our need to see the presence of Jesus among disadvantaged and ethnic groups as well as among Aborigines in our society. O'Collins gives attention to feminine as well as masculine attitudes. He believes Australians are more aware of space than time.

In fact our habits and our literature indicate a repressed fear of the empty, isolated environment that makes up so much of our continent. By way of more general comment Banks remarks on the growing literature on the popular culture (e.g, from architectural icons like the Sydney Harbour Bridge, through publications such as the **Women's Weekly** to Australian films and television). He writes of the symbols of (a dominant?) city life: the dream of car and home, the effects of mobility and the information society, the realities of commuting, working and shopping. What we need, of course, he says, is for a number of contemporary theologies to develop in Australia, reflecting the different ethnic, as well as class and gender groupings in our society, though ones that also are attuned to what binds us together humanly and nationally. A start is now being made in these directions though till recently most effort has been directed at establishing the challenge of multiculturalism and place of women in the Church.

When it comes to our image of God a concentration on the Son at the expense of the Father is partly due to our Australian tendency to prefer the tangible and concrete, but the large-scale phenomenon of what Ronald Conway terms "the vanishing father" in our society indicates a very deep need to develop a well-rounded theology of the Father in our local setting. Also, living in a country once referred to as "the land of the Holy Spirit", it is strange that so little reference is made to the Spirit.

Robert Banks acknowledges that the search for an indigenous theology follows other moves over the last twenty years in film, theatre and music, which themselves build upon longer-standing efforts in literature, the arts and historical studies. Theology appears to have taken up the rear.

My comment is this may be so but I have drawn attention to it in this lecture because I believe it is particularly, if not exclusively, close to being the chief bearer of values in our community. I commend Robert Bank's most valuable study to your reading and discussion.

One may approach all of this in a simply utilitarian manner: it may help us to tell the welfare story in a more persuasive, more tellingly grounded way. But there is more to it than that. Anything that taps a deeper level of thought, sympathy, and understanding is a means to self-renewal. We may need not only to get out of a rut, but to be set free from what has become an obsession. To probe the future with imagination and intelligence could help us in that.

I must conclude. I do so with the observation that there appears to be no adequate account, no historical or social evaluation of the indispensable place of the voluntary agencies and the leadership at all levels, both voluntary and professional, in our national story. The publication of such a study could have been a splendid bicentennial project.

Truly, one cannot see this story coming to an end. But the vocation of the countless individuals involved is always at risk. And it has been a concern for the girding up and renewal of that vocation and call that has been at the heart of this lecture.

## REFERENCES

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The Right Reverend Robert Dann has been a Bishop since 1969, when he was then consecrated and became Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Melbourne (to fill the vacancy created by Bishop Sambell's elevation to the Archbishopric of Perth). In 1977 he was elected and enthroned as Archbishop of Melbourne. He retired in 1983.

Bishop Dann was born in 1914 and studied theology at Ridley College and took an Arts degree while at Trinity College Melbourne.

He was priested in 1946 and became Director of Youth and Religious Education for the Diocese of Melbourne. After five years he went to his first incumbency at Cheltenham/Beaumaris and later was Vicar of the parishes of St George, Malvern, and St John, Footscray.

He then went to full-time service as Archdeacon of Essendon, and Director of Evangelism and Extension. The latter diocesan responsibility included New Area initiatives with sites, first buildings and early ministries. He maintained a continuing interest in education especially in the application of group dynamics in congregational life.

He was a delegate to the World Conference of Christian Youth at Oslo in 1947 and later was for many years chairman of the Inter Church New Areas Commission.

He has recently twice assisted in the B.H.P. Awards for the Pursuit of Excellence as a member of the Community Welfare and Service panel.

Bishop Dann is married to Yvonne and they have three children.